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Cranberries

A radio conversation between Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, Mr. E. J. Rowell, Bureau of Agricultural Economics, and Mr. Wallace Kadderly, Office of Information, broadcast Tuesday, November 7, 1939, in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, by the National Broadcasting Company and a network of 104 associate radio stations.

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

WALLACE KADDERLY:

Two of our regular reporters, Ruth Van Deman and E. J. (Mike) Rowell, have drawn their chairs up here to the microphone for a joint session today. That generally means a talk about food...something that's plentiful and good to eat....

E. J. ROWELL:

Cranberries this time, Wallace, to be specific.

KADDERLY:

Then this must be a boxful of cranberries...this box you've set here on the table, Ruth. Or, is it?

RUTH VAN DEMAN:

All in due time, Wallace.

KADDERLY:

You in on this, Mike?

ROWELL:

No, I wasn't consulted.

KADDERLY:

Well, it doesn't look like a box anybody would carry cranberry sauce in.

VAN DEMAN:

You know, Wallace, what sometimes happens when people get too curious...Mike, will you proceed with the market news on cranberries?

ROWELL:

With pleasure...Especially since this is a fine year for cranberries. In practically every one of the 5 States where cranberries are grown commercially there's a more than average crop. Washington State may be the one exception. But even there this year's harvest will be only a few hundred barrels under last year's.

VAN DEMAN:

Didn't you say we'd have a total of something like 600 thousand barrels of cranberries?

ROWELL:

More than that...in fact, more than 666 thousand. Massachusetts alone, which means Cape Cod, will have around 450 thousand barrels. Wisconsin comes next with about 103 thousand. Then New Jersey with 90 thousand.

(over)

KADDERLY:

And Oregon. Don't forget those cranberry bogs in Oregon...and Washington.

ROWELL:

Yes, Washington and Oregon have the cranberry bogs for the West Coast.

VAN DEMAN:

Cranberries have to have a very special kind of bog, don't they?

KADDERLY:

Yes, peat bogs.

ROWELL:

Flat as a floor, and covered with white sand...And with plenty of water to flood them when the frost threatens to ruin the berries....At least that's the way cranberry bogs are in Massachusetts.

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, I've seen them. I happened to be down on the Cape one fall at cranberry-picking time. The frost had turned the bogs red...a deep crimson red.

And, as you say, they're flat and level as a floor, with the creeping vines forming a solid mat.

As we drove by one after another, I kept thinking of Oriental rugs, those beautiful deep red Bokharas, spread out in the sunshine....

ROWELL:

A good cranberry bog is about as priceless as a fine Oriental carpet. And they used to be all hand-made...that is the cranberry bogs. Now modern machinery is used to some extent. But I understand it still costs somewhere around \$1500 an acre to prepare, and plant, and bring a cranberry bog up to bearing age.

VAN DEMAN:

Then maybe I should say a rare Oriental rug studded with rubies...when the shiny red berries are ripe.

ROWELL:

There is truth as well as poetry in that. And by the way, the color of those "rubies" differs with the variety.

VAN DEMAN:

They're not all pigeon blood?

ROWELL:

No, some cranberries are a light red when they're ripe. And some have one white cheek and one red one. And some are a deep purple-red, almost black.

VAN DEMAN:

They all act the same in the kitchen, as far as I know. They all have two things that make them perfect for jelly and sauce.

ROWELL:

They're certainly sour enough.

VAN DEMAN:

Acid, yes, and pectin...those are the two things cranberries just naturally have. All the cook has to do is to add the sugar. Get in sugar in the right proportion to the fruit and even cranberry sauce with skins and all, will stiffen up like stiff jelly.

KADDERLY:

Ah, something tells me this box is about to open.

ROWELL:

"And when the pie was opened, the birds began to sing."

VAN DEMAN:

Who said anything about pie? I was talking about pectin, and acid, and sugar. The right proportion to make perfect cranberry sauce.

ROWELL:

Sometimes don't you put cranberry sauce in a pie shell, and bake it, with strips of crust crisscross over the top?

VAN DEMAN:

That is one of the very best ways I know to make cranberry pie, Mike.

ROWELL:

And raisins are in with the cranberries?

VAN DEMAN:

Cranberry and raisin pie. Yes, I got acquainted with that first at a New England church supper...But now back to those proportions for the cranberry sauce. For every quart, or pound, of cranberries allow 2 cups of sugar....

ROWELL:

That's twice as many cranberries as sugar...by measure.

VAN DEMAN:

That's right...a pint of sugar to a quart of berries ready to cook...and 1-1/2 cups of water.

Make a sirup of the sugar and water. And as soon as it boils enough to dissolve the sugar, pour in the berries, cover the kettle, and let them cook rapidly for about 10 minutes. The skins will soon be popping right and left, and that's all the cooking the sauce needs. More cooking just destroys more of the vitamin C.

If you like your cranberry sauce with the skins in, turn this hot sauce into a mold, or into small dishes for individual servings. After a few hours in a cold place it will be jellied.

If you want it without the skins, put it through a strainer while it's hot.

ROWELL:

That's fine. But suppose you like clear cranberry jelly better than sauce?

VAN DEMAN:

It's a little more bother, but perfectly simple. You just cook the cranberries with the water. And let the juice drip through a jelly bag. Then combine this clear juice with sugar, and boil it till it makes jelly. It will give the jelly test very soon.

For the exact proportions for clear cranberry jelly, Mr. Rowell, I refer you to F.B. 1800.

ROWELL:

F.B. 1800?

VAN DEMAN:

A certain well-known Farmers' Bulletin called "Homemade Jellies, Jams, and Preserves".

ROWELL:

Wallace, will you do the honors by that?

KADDERLY:

I will...in a few minutes...after I've found out what is in this box. I'm sure it has something to do with this broadcast.

ROWELL:

And something to eat.

VAN DEMAN:

Talk about guessing games. Well, I'll tell you this much, you're warm.

But before we end this great mystery, I want to explain something else about cranberry jelly. It has a tendency to "weep", especially after the mold of jelly has been cut.

ROWELL:

Yes, I've noticed that. What makes it?

VAN DEMAN:

Probably the very large amount of acid in the cranberry juice. The jelly seems to contract and squeeze out some of the liquid. The chemists have a name for it...synaerisis.

ROWELL:

It hasn't anything to do with the way the jelly's made then?

VAN DEMAN:

Not in the least. But it's one reason why most home jelly makers like to use their cranberry jelly while it's fresh....And make more as they need it from time to time all winter.

Farmers' Bulletin 1800, by the way, has a recipe for a very good cranberry conserve with raisins and oranges.

KADDERLY:

So that's what you have in the box...a sample of cranberry conserve with raisins and oranges.

VAN DEMAN:

Wallace, I never dreamed that there could be so much interest in any one box. Here, open it and see for yourself.

KADDERLY:

(Opening) A whole flock of little pies...one...two...three..four...five....

ROWELL:

Open-faced pies...cranberry and raisin, or I'm not a Yankee.

ROGERS:

Does a mere announcer get a look in.....

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, sir. I brought these in self defense. I just couldn't stand those piteous pleas for real food with a broadcast on food.

KADDERLY:

So you made us cranberry and raisin pies.

VAN DEMAN:

No, those were made by a better pie-maker than I. They're really just little pastry shells, baked first, then the filling of cooked cranberries and raisins was put in just before I brought them up here. That's a way to keep the piecrust crisp and tender.

ROWELL:

They're the real thing, all right.

KADDERLY:

I call this a perfect ending for a cranberry broadcast.

VAN DEMAN:

Don't forget the bulletin with the recipes for the cranberry jelly and the cranberry conserve.

KADDERLY:

Ad lib offer of "Homemade Jellies, Jams, and Preserves".

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